

Comments on Montgomery County Climate Action Plan: Public Draft
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NOTE: I am commenting mainly on issues I have researched as a sociologist focused on climate change issues.

GENERAL COMMENTS: The draft MCCAP tends to assume that the only or main barrier to change is cost. However, people's daily lives are built around and woven into the current infrastructure and institutional and personal practices. Change is much harder than installing new technologies.

The Climate Ambassadors, invited art, and public participation efforts are laudable. But be clear about what you want from these and what you are willing to do with the input. If priorities change as a result of stakeholder input, trust builds. If input is ignored or overridden, people will resent it.

The extensive tables are relatively uninformative. Actions and texts are truncated and the analyses are not explained.

Definitions list:

In the formal list is "adaptive capacity" but not "adaptation." As considerable differences exist as to what constitutes adaptation, this should be a listed and defined term. The "actions" section specifies adaptation.

The definitions of "resilience" and "vulnerability" seem similar.

Why not use the definitions provided by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change?

The MCCAP is not clear whether the goal is net emissions reductions or elimination of all GHG emissions.

The Planning Principles are good, except that co-benefits such as health, air and water quality, and better waste management, are missing. Recommend adding “Embrace Co-benefits.”

Adding local art work is a great idea.

BACKGROUND: The photo does not go with the text, which doesn't mention transportation.

I'm surprised not to find more on waste management, reduced plastic use, composting ... starting with the MoCo Progress map. And the brief section later in the Plan is sort of thrown in.

Pp. 11-12: What are the pathways of influence/power each group has? (The federal Department of Energy's Citizens Advisory Groups have varied in their success.)

P. 12: The Resilience Ambassadors Program is well described; the results will matter if the RAs have a strong role.

P. 15: The phrase “decent health care” (4th bullet) seems problematic, implying a negative. Is access the point or is the quality of the health care the issue?

Pp. 20-16 (Socioeconomic Profile): It's easy to make a list, but more effective to look at combined characteristics. People are poor AND unduly burdened by energy costs AND get little or no health care AND are poorly educated (maybe add lack of internet access? Food insecurity? Lack of adequate housing?). Recall Amartya Sen's definition of poverty, adopted by the UN, is the lack of choices (i.e., not so much the lack of money). There is a good focus on racial equity and social justice.

Pp. 27-28 (Community Conversations): This is excellent—and would be an excellent opportunity to relate the real-world concerns of people to climate actions proposed and their co-benefits. But, aside from scattered quotations, I don't see that being done. Yet here are potential supporters, if they see their concerns being taken seriously.

P. 34: The “calendar” graph is confusing. How is it a calendar? And the UHI description is too technical—very hard to follow.

Most of the discussion of scenarios is too technical for most readers and should be rewritten. The technical discussion should be in an appendix, with an accessible summary here.

P. 45 box: Add “Heat” to the title, and add to the box a research result that mortality and morbidity were greatly reduced in places where good social networks existed. See Klinenberg E. *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press; 2002.

P. 47, Climate Vulnerability Assessment: also identify social acceptance, political willingness, etc.—i.e., not just negatives. The mainstream definitions of vulnerability include both sensitivity (negative) and adaptive capacity (positive).

P. 48, Climate Risk Reduction: The factors seem to assume business-as-usual in a passive way; other factors could include resources for change, willingness or propensity to change, etc.

Figures 15 and 23: add a note to explain that the codes (e.g., A-2) refer to specific actions and cross-references to text that discusses each. Could reformat to lead with the actual action and a parenthetical phrase, e.g., “Culvert Repairs (A-2, discussed on pages

P. 53: So Scope 2 emissions are included?

P. 58: The strengths and weaknesses of the CURB model should be briefly discussed.

Figure 28 is too difficult to make sense of.

How was the level of co-benefits for each action determined?

Energy: Is solar the only renewable energy source considered? Waste-to-energy is being produced now in the county but is not discussed. Wind energy is not discussed. Natural gas produced from composting (can be used on farms for power) is not discussed. And, perhaps most worrisome, there is little discussion of energy efficiency, which is the cheapest form of emissions reduction. The CCAP also does not seem to take net-zero building design very seriously: why is that? Are emissions going to be counted whether or not they are offset?

Equity-enhancing measures are discussed (mostly financial support, although other types of support exist), but other social goals are not. Many emissions-reducing actions have been implemented on the strength of their health benefits, for example.

P. 96: The Resilience Ambassador comment re a need for explanation of solar options is not addressed in the section or in the plan. If you gain stakeholder input, you must use it.

Action E-5: First, implement energy efficiency actions, then electrify using renewable sources. (See B-1)

Buildings: The federal Department of Energy experience shows this is partly an educational effort for designers, builders, installers, and others involved in building construction and maintenance. These contractors and employees, like many others, tend to stick with what they know. Support activities that build learning communities.

Why are ESCO arrangements not covered? Paying for initial costs out of energy savings should be an option.

Table 14: This should account for higher initial costs and many kinds of residential arrangements; tenancies, co-ops, condos, etc.

Transportation overview should provide a summary of the alternative forms of transport and also mention work from home arrangements. The even brief inclusion of the need for education is good.

Some metropolitan areas have improved transit routes by surveying commuters about their needs (timing, work locations).

T-2 should include bike racks and roofed areas.

T-3 should mention another deterrent, the perception of limits, or "range anxiety."

Are EV Zip cars considered?

S-1 should indicate potential partners, such as the Friends of Sligo Creek, the Sierra Club, Audubon Society, and other environmental organizations.

All nature-based actions should emphasize native plants.

A-11: should be "Climate-adapted building code" (not "adopted"), yes?

G-6 Climate Ambassadors should work together and with people outside government.

The participation strategies has the flavor of many communication strategies, that of the knowledgeable government instructing/informing the ignorant public. This is a mistaken approach; people don't respond well to it, and the government fails to learn important information. Engagement must be an equal, multiple-party exchange, with the government willing to learn as well as teach. P-5 is much better in this regard.